

DISTRICT OR VISITING NURSING *

BY MARY E. SMITH

Detroit, Mich.

IN introducing the subject of district or visiting nursing at this meeting of the superintendents of training-schools, it is a matter of keen regret to me that I have had to have recourse to a paper that was originally written only as a part of a discussion of the subject for an entirely different meeting, where a rigid time limit was enforced, which precluded the possibility of elaborating the points brought forward. When your president requested the use of it for the present meeting, my first thought was to refuse it, knowing that it so inadequately deals with a subject that is each day growing more and more important in every city of our land. Though not altogether a new field, I believe it to be one that has a very bright future in store for it, in which many earnest-minded women of our profession may find the passport to their satisfaction in life through their noble efforts to help others to help themselves.

Realizing, however, that many times the discussion which follows a paper is of greater importance in bringing about more desired results than the paper itself, I offer it, in all its meagreness, without apology or further explanation, trusting that each superintendent in attendance at this convention will do what she can to further the interests of district nursing in her own school, and thereby help to provide adequately trained women to take up the work in new places or to follow in the footsteps of those who have done such noble pioneer service in this peculiar field of labor.

To-day the question of district or visiting nursing is one of vital importance in every city, because it has become an educational force. The nurses reach the people during sickness, and so have the best opportunity of forcing home lessons in hygiene and right living that no amount of talking to or teaching under other circumstances could induce them to heed.

Florence Nightingale says: "I do not think there is any human being who may be as useful as a district nurse, if she is helpful without being interfering."

Jane Addams, of Hull House Social Settlement, Chicago, says: "The Visiting Nurse Association has always seemed to me to be free from some of the faults found in organized philanthropic effort, and to be managed with wisdom and care."

* Read at the ninth annual meeting of the American Society of Superintendents of Training-Schools for Nurses, at Detroit, September 9-11.

Just here I wish to emphasize the fact that it tends to the preservation of the home, lessens the necessity of institutional aggrandizement, caring for cases that for various reasons either cannot or will not be cared for in hospitals or county institutions, and in a measure thereby prevents crime and pauperism.

The older associations have proved beyond the shadow of a doubt not only the wisdom, but, I would add, the necessity of employing only graduates from our best training-schools as visiting nurses. Tact, courtesy, and refinement are as necessary to the visiting nurse as the more or less mechanical skill she has acquired in the performance of routine duties in the sick-room, if she is to meet and overcome successfully the ignorance, prejudices, and superstitions of patients and their friends. Having proved by experience that the best are none too good for this peculiar work, it is imperative that we who have assumed the responsibility of directing the affairs of such an association shall put forth our best efforts to secure only such women for the active work as shall come up to the high standards we have raised. Vacancies are constantly occurring on the working staff of every visiting nurse association, and many times these are most difficult to fill quickly and well. How best to meet these emergencies is a problem each board must solve either systematically or as best it can, when these occasions arise. It will be generally admitted that it will be best done, if done systematically. I therefore suggest that each association, as soon after organization as possible, shall employ a trained superintendent of nurses, with an office situated in the same building as the central offices of all the charity organizations of the city. Having a central office in such a place would be a most effective way of making our work and its needs known to many people, besides securing often needed coöperation from other branches of charity work without needless loss of time to the nurses themselves or to members of the board. I would suggest, in addition to this, that the board, through this superintendent of nurses, offer the officials of one or more regular hospital training-schools in the city the privilege of training in the district work a limited number of their senior students. This supply would be constant, and would have its economic advantages, as well as be the means of securing a larger number of specially trained women to select from in the future. This would not interfere with accepting graduates for a similar training if any desired to take it. Under this arrangement the regular working corps of nurses would be graduates from good training-schools, just as at present; in addition there would be a limited number of responsible senior students from one or more of our best training-schools given the opportunity of training in this peculiar work. Thus, the people, whose best interests we are

trying to serve, would not only be as well taken care of as at present, but as the work grows we would be able to select especially trained women for all increase in our permanent staff of nurses. The Detroit Visiting Nurse Association is a comparatively young organization, its fourth annual report having just been issued. The members of the Executive Board feel that while the work has increased rapidly, the growth has been natural, and they have been able to meet the new conditions satisfactorily. An especial interest is taken in the home life of its staff of nurses, and the board feels that the high standard of work maintained by them, their increased zeal, and fine esprit de corps are due almost as much to this feature as to their high sense of professional responsibility. Perhaps the most distinctive thing that has been done has been to send one of the nurses each year, at the expense of the association, for a month's observation and inspiration into the district work of another city. Last year the time was spent in the Nursing Settlement of New York City, under Miss Wald. This year it has been in Chicago, under Miss Fulmer. From both places they have returned filled with enthusiasm over the different phases of the work they have had the opportunity of studying. This experience has not only widened their horizons, but has been a direct benefit to the patients and to the board, whose interests are better served by their greater knowledge of present conditions, and by the larger understanding they have gained of possible development in this wonderful charity. So convinced are we of the triple benefit derived from this course, that on behalf of our Executive Board I would say that we will be only too glad to offer the same courtesy to others desirous of studying our methods that has been so generously extended to us by the workers in New York City and in Chicago.

SCHOOLS FOR CRIPPLES IN NEW YORK

BY DILLA DIEHL CRAWFORD

THE teaching of crippled children was started in New York some four years ago by the efforts of one earnest Christian woman who was herself a cripple.

During that time the work has spread considerably, and there are now five schools located in different parts of the city. The object in organizing these schools was to reach those children who, having been discharged from hospitals, were unable to attend the public schools owing to their physical infirmities, and without these schools would receive no educational advantages. The one in which the writer is directly in-